

**ANNUAL MEETING, FIRST UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF MINNEAPOLIS
JUNE 2, 2019
CONGREGANT FEEDBACK ON CO-LOCATION**

Overview

Information and Listening Sessions on possible co-location with Shir Tikvah were conducted throughout April and May; a summary of congregant feedback and straw poll ratings was presented at the Annual Meeting. This input is also presented in detail on our website under the co-location tab. One critical issue identified focused on whether or not co-location would enhance or distract from our racial justice mission and our support of our POCI congregants. These concerns were raised at the Annual Meeting, and small group discussions focused on several related questions about the impact of possible co-location on our racial justice mission and our People of Color/Indigenous (POCI) congregants. Board of Trustee members facilitated these groups; input from these sessions will be discussed at upcoming Board meetings. Following are the results of a straw poll completed on June 2 along with written comments collected on June 2.

Following are the results of a straw poll conducted at the annual and a summary of the written comments collected at that time. We have divided the comments into those from congregants favoring co-location, undecided about co-location, and favoring or leaning toward remaining on our own. Note some similar themes across these perspectives about the need to continue deep discernment about co-location and our racial justice mission, to hear from our POCI Caucus and Change Team, to learn more about Shir Tikvah's racial justice work, and to answer questions about governance, financials, parking, and so on.

The theme of summer worship is "yes, and...". As Senior Co-Ministers and Co-location Steering Committee, YES, we feel we must continue to listen deeply to the needs and concerns of our POCI congregants and Change Team (along with all congregants) about our mission and what we must preserve and protect within it. AND we must continue to provide further education and understanding of Jewish racial identity, relationship of white supremacy, anti-Semitism, anti-Blackness, and Islamophobia, and of the variety of relationships between Jews and Muslims (including the work that Shir Tikvah is engaged in with Muslim communities).

Summary of Ratings on Straw Poll (June 2, 2019)

What are your thoughts right now about co-location with Shir Tikvah?	Number of responses	% of Total
I am enthusiastic about co-location.	37	19%
I am supportive of co-location.	51	27%
I am undecided.	40	21%
I lean toward remaining on our own.	30	15%
I am not in favor of co-location.	34	18%
Total	192	100%

Those that voted in favor of co-location expressed the following views:

- *Overall support for co-location:* First Universalist and Shir Tikvah joint commitment to racial justice; a chance to integrate our values and action; an opportunity to expand our community
- Request for more information on Shir Tikvah's racial justice activities and how we might work together for racial justice
- Suggestion that resulting savings, or a portion of savings, could be dedicated to racial justice work and POCI caucus
- Need to hear from POCI caucus; expressed enthusiasm will be informed by POCI response
- Need to prioritize learning more about anti-Semitism and dismantling white supremacy as a congregation
- Value having a financial partner leading to increased financial stability
- Support co-location yet have some concerns about balancing needs of two growing congregations
- Impatience with members who want every question answered and every detail nailed down now; if we move forward, it is a leap of faith and we must all stay flexible and make it work
- Need to make sure we serve core values of supporting all people, including Muslims; creating space where divergent communities come together in our space

Those who were undecided voiced the following views:

- Need to understand views and responses from the POCI caucus and Change Team; support is dependent on their support
- Need for more time for the racial justice discussion, more understanding of Shir Tikvah's commitment to racial justice and how we would work together; racial justice should be the vision for our co-location

- Need to provide support for Somali community
- Great process in place, let's continue discerning
- Need more information about: how the joint board would function, finances, security, parking and space allocation

Those who lean toward or favor First Universalist independence expressed the following concerns and suggestions:

- *Note: many of those not in favor of co-location commented on positive benefits, yet felt the risks of co-location outweighed the benefits*
- *Distraction from our mission:* concern about losing focus; diverting ministerial attention from our congregational goals; length of time and energy and money that it will take
- *Distraction from our racial justice work:* concern about impact on our RJ work and relationship with POCI congregants; distraction from Black justice work; concern about perception of being welcoming to Muslim community
- *Desire to hear from POCI Caucus and Change Team;* need to ensure that POCI caucus' input is heard and valued
- *Parking issues:* can't support unless there is a solution to parking needs
- Worry that neighbors will institute resident-only parking
- *Implementation and co-ownership too challenging and too risky:* fear we'd overextend into a building/plan that we cannot sustain as either single community; we are not ready to take on shared leadership and management with another congregation; expect friction among congregants and between staffs; financials are vague and risky
- *Concern about future:* we could outgrow our space within 3-5 years; what happens when Rev. Schroeder and Rabbi Latz are not here co-location seems dependent on them; uncertainty about regaining our assets if we want to leave; fear of losing congregants and losing a community that has so enriched my life
- *Suggestions:*
 - We could take joint action with Shir Tikvah without co-location
 - There are better ways to achieve most stated objectives – less dramatic and varied path to collaborating on values and social justice issues
 - Access consulting at national office for impartial weighing and prioritization
 - Identify other possible and interested congregations who might co-locate with us
 - Find a new building for First U; purchase lot at Lake and Blaisdell and jointly build